THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) to (e) Many of Indian mission in the Gulf do not maintain panels of local lawyers. Given the variety of possible disputes, several Missions feel that maintaining a panel of lawyers may not serve any useful purpose. However, Indian nationals abroad are provided guidance and assistance by Missions; where legal advice/assistance becomes necessary, our embassies refer Indian nationals to prominent local lawyers.

Professionally qualified members of the Indian community in the Gulf having legal difficulties are generally able to afford the legal fees and pursue their cases in local courts, whenever required. In most Gulf countries, however, judicial processes in labour cases are inform and quick and services of professional lawyers are not required. In such cases, our Embassies provide the service of interpreters and officials from the Labour Section of the Embassy who assist the labourers in representing their cases before the courts.

The Embassy of India in Kuwait provides assistance to NRIs in Kuwait and, where necessary, refers them to local lawyers for seeking expert legal opinion/ assistance.

Hiring of Accommodation for Haj Pilgrims in Madina

942. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received complaint regarding hiring of accommodation for Indian Haj Pilgrims in Madina;

(b) whether levy of penalty was recommended against contractor of accommodation at Madina;

(c) if so, what is the penalty recommended by Indian Embassy; and

(d) whether penlty was levied, if so, how much?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House. *(See below)*

Statement

The accommodation arrangements in Madinah are different from those in Makkah in that a pilgrim spends a maximum of eight days in Madinah as against three weeks in Makkah. Accordingly, in Madinah the building contractors utilise their buildings to accommodate four to five sets of pilgrims. Hence, in order to implement this arrangements, pilgrims have to move into and out of Madinah strictly as per the prescribed travel schedules.

During Haj 97, there has been complaints that in Madinah some Indian pilgrims had been accommodated beyond the distance limits provided for in the accommodation contract with the building contractor, as a result of which the Consulate General of India, Jeddah had recommended a fine on the contractor. However, when this matter was examined in greater details, it was found that the pilgrims had not moved to Madinah as per the prescribed travel schedule, due to which the accommodation arrangements of the contractor had got disputed: while in some instances, the units set aside by him for Indian pilgrims had remained unutilised, on other occasions more pilgrims arrived in Madinah than had been anticipated. Hence, he had no choice but to accommodate such pilgrims in buildings at distances beyond the prescribed limits. Accordingly, it was

decided that a token fine of Saudi Riyals 25,000 (Rs. 2.5 lakhs) would be imposed on the contractor.

पारपत्र कार्यालयों का कम्प्यूटरीकरण

943. चौधरी हरमोहन सिंह यादव:
श्री ईश दत्त यादव:

क्या **प्रधान मंत्री** यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार ने सभी पारपत्र कार्यालयों को कम्प्यूटरीकृत कर दिया है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो ऐसे पारपत्र कार्यालयों का ब्यौरा क्या है जिन्हें अब तक कम्प्यूटरीकृत किया जा चुका है; और

(ग) ऐसे पारपत्र कार्यालयों का ब्यौरा क्या है जिन्हें अब तक कम्प्यूटरीकृत नहीं किया गया है और इसके कारण क्या हैं?

विदेश मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्रीमती वसुन्धरा राजे): (क) जी नहीं।

(ख) अहमदाबाद, बंगलौर, कलकत्ता, चण्डीगढ़, चेन्नई, कोचीन, दिल्ली, गोवा, हैदराबाद, जयपुर, कोजीकोड़, लखनऊ, मुम्बई, त्रिची और त्रिवेन्द्रम स्थित पासपोर्ट कार्यालयों का कम्प्यूटरीकरण कर दिया गया है।

(ग) बरेली, भोपाल, भुवनेश्वर, गाजियाबाद, गुवाहटी, जालन्धर, जम्मू नागपुर, पटना, थाणे, विशाखापट्टनम और श्रीनगर स्थित पासपोर्ट कार्यालयों का अभी तक कम्प्यूटरीकरण नहीं हुआ है। ये प्रायः वे कार्यालय हैं जो या तो हाल ही में खुले हैं या फिर इनमें अपेक्षाकृत कम संख्या में आवेदन प्राप्त होते है। इन कार्यालयों का कम्प्यूटरीकरण शीघ्र किए जाने की आशा है।

Passport Offices in States

944. SHRI YERRA NARAYANA SWAMY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to increase the number of Passport Offices in every State;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it a fact that the present system of passport administration is not helpful to people; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken to extend passport facilities all over the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) No, Sir. At present, 27 Passport Offices and 10 Collection Centres are functional all over the country. A Passprot Office at Pune is to be opened shortly.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Opening of new Passport Offices is based on certain parameters such as the location of existing Passport Offices, inflow of applications from a particular region, and the recommendations of the Standing Committee of Parliament for External Affairs that there must be at least 50,000 applications per annum from an area for a new Passport Office to be opened in that area.

Improvement in Passport Issuance System

945. SHRI YERRA NARAYANA-SWAMY : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would consider suggestion from public spirited organisations to improve the passport issuance system.

(b) whether any efforts have been made to improve the system in Andhra Pradesh during 1998-99;

(c) whether innovative suggestions for improvement of passport administration in Andhra Pradesh would be considered sympathetically; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Of the two Passport Offices currently functioning at Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam in the state of Andhra Pradesh, the office at Hyderabad has